DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 102 709 EA 006 830

AUTHOR Nunnery, Michael Y.
TITLE Trends in Administrative Practice in Education.
PUB DATE Apr 75
NOTE 8p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (60th, Washington, D.C., March 31-April 4, 1975)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.76 HC-$1.58 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS *Administrative Organization; Administrative Principles; *Administrator Education; Board Administrator Relationship; Decision Making; *Educational Administration; *Educational Trends; Elementary Secondary Education; Governance; Interprofessional Relationship; Management; *Power Structure

ABSTRACT

The four trends chosen for discussion in this paper represent the impressions of the observer and are selected because of their perceived relevance for persons having a major interest in educational administrator preparation programs. The author observes that (1) educational administration and governance in the public sector are becoming increasingly entwined with general government and public administration; (2) the school board-superintendent team, which has been viewed by the laity as soverign and in fact has exercised considerable power, is becoming increasingly powerless; (3) the decisionmaking process in local school districts is becoming increasingly more open, conflict-laden, and time-consuming; and (4) the traditional relationship between practitioners and professors wherein professors solved real-world problems for practitioners is changing to a relationship wherein practitioners and professors work as equals in problem solving. (Author/WM)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

4 IV
EA

ED102709

TRENDS IN ADMINISTRATIVE PRACTICE IN EDUCATION*

Given the diversity of administrative practice in education, the trends are many; yet, none are universally applicable. Accordingly, any listing of trends in practice is selective (representing primarily the limited perceptions of the observer) and of questionable validity. The four trends chosen for this discussion are no exception. They represent the impressions of the observer and are selected because of their perceived relevance for persons having a major interest in educational administrator preparation programs.

First, educational administration and governance in the public sector is becoming increasingly entwined with general government and public administration. That is, the wall of separation between educational governance and general governance which many educational leaders have for years sought to maintain is eroding rapidly. The trend is not of recent origin; it has been underway for at least two decades. However, events of recent years have accelerated it. Specifically, attention is called to the following: (1) In many states the legislature is meeting annually, has extensive and competent staffs, is composed of many able persons who view their positions as "full-time," conducts extensive hearings and studies, and enacts numerous specific and restrictive educational bills with little attention being given to the wishes of school administrators. (One suspects that often the chief aides for the education committees of the legislature are more influential than the more widely-respected superintendents and/or the chief state school officer.) (2) School district reorganization in some states has resulted in more school districts and municipalities having coterminous

EA 006 830

* Prepared by Michael Y. Nunnery, Professor, Department of Educational Administration, University of Florida, Gainesville, Fla., 32611 for AERA, 1975 Division A Symposium entitled "Trends in Educational Administration."

boundaries. This often means education is more subject to the numerous municipal rules and procedures. (3) Partisan election of chief state school officers, local and state board members, and district superintendents is certainly not novel. The result is less separation of education and general government politics. (4) The chief state school officer, as the secretary of education or due to some unique legal arrangement, has cabinet status in a few states. This means more linkage with general state government and administration. (5) The administrative agency for collective bargaining within education in several states is the public employees relations commission or the equivalent. Thus a general government agency administers this critical process. (6) The concept of state fiscal neutrality protends decreased taxing power for local school districts and greater fiscal reliance on the state legislature and federal Congress. (7) In many states legislative acts and gubernatorial edicts have given agencies of the executive branch of state government a significant voice in educational affairs. (8) In some few localities the concept of a center for human services (e.g., educational, health, recreational, welfare) under the control of a single board and executive is a reality. These events, plus many others serve to increase the interdependence and interaction of general government leaders and educational leaders at various levels.

Assuming some degree of validity in the foregoing assertion, one feels compelled to raise the question about the extent to which preparation programs are providing potential educational administrators with the knowledge and understanding needed to function in the general government arena. What are they taught about general state government? About municipal government? Do they have an opportunity through some type of "hands on" experience to gain insights regarding general government norms and sentiments?

Second, the school board-superintendent team, which has been viewed by

the laity as sovereign and in fact has exercised considerable power, is becoming increasingly powerless. It seems that the power of this team is being eroded from "underneath" as well as by higher authority. The impact of federal and state court decisions on the school board-superintendent team has been so widely documented that further recounting seems unnecessary. Previously mention was made of the activities of the legislature and the general government bureaucracy. Contracts with teachers unions, which exist in some 45 states and cover approximately one million teachers, represents another restriction on the power of the school board-superintendent team to act. Decentralization is a fact of life in a majority of the school districts enrolling 50,000 or more pupils. In practically all of these decentralized districts the central board-general superintendent have in accordance with statutes or voluntarily transferred a measure of their authority to a lower echelon (e.g., to community or regional boards). Furthermore, even in many school districts where there is no administrative decentralization, local school councils composed of lay citizens have been created. Even though the most of these have advisory powers only, as a practical matter school councils cannot be ignored. As such, they constitute another infringement on the traditional powers of the school board-superintendent team. The phrase "school-based management" is being heard in a few states. The phrase lacks precise meaning; yet, in general it refers to an arrangement whereby a local school center is guaranteed by statute or by local action a set sum of money based on types of programs provided and pupils enrolled. The local school principal and staff are charged with the responsibility for goal setting, program planning, budgeting, and evaluating. Whether this arrangement exists by law or the board has voluntarily

agreed to it, the result is the same--a diffusion of power.

The relative desirability of this dilution of school board-superintendent power is beyond the scope of this discussion. However, assuming it does constitute a reality of practice, are preparation programs equipping students to cope? For example, are would-be school principals being provided the needed planning and budgeting knowledge to assume the added responsibilities associated with school-based management?

Third, the decision-making process in local school districts is becoming increasingly more open, conflict-laden, and time-consuming. Some states now have government-in-the-sunshine laws. At the extreme, these laws require all meetings of public bodies (e.g., a school board) to be open. Also, "administrative procedures" acts are coming into existence. (These acts generally require governmental bodies to provide public notice of intended action, hold public hearings, and allow a specified time lapse before final action is taken.) Such enactments, coupled with the apparent increase in the desire of the lay public to "know" (a presumed expression of distrust of government including the White House, state house, court house, and school house) and the zeal of the media in accommodating this desire, has made local school district decision making a more highly visible process. Previously reference was made to the diffusion of power for educational governance. Given a controversial issue before the board of a local school district, it would not be novel to find the state education agency, an agency of general state government, representatives of employee unions, municipal officials, spokespersons for various lay pressure groups, community school boards, school councils, and the like attempting to influence the decision of the board. Given such diverse interests and the high probability of sharp value differences, conflict and lengthy debate seem

inevitable. One suspects that ever more frequently issues will be resolved by bargaining and "politics" (both being forms of compromise) rather than by domination (verbally condemned but frequently practiced) or integration (verbally supported but seldom practiced).

Again, quite apart from the relative merits of decision making marked by increased openness, conflict, and time-consuming activities, the presumed existence of such a trend causes one to think of the possible implications for administrator preparation programs. What can be done? What should be done? Should a concerted effort be made to help students develop a defensible moral philosophy as a basis for personal professional behavior in such situations? Are students being provided with the best that is known about organizational conflict and conflict management? Do students leave preparation programs with full awareness of the demands accompanying a highly visible position in a local school district?

Fourth, the traditional relationship between practitioners and professors wherein professors solved real-world problems for practitioners is changing to a relationship where practitioners and professors work as equals in problem solution. This seems to be a logical consequence of increased professionalization of the field of educational administration. Also, several factors appear to have contributed to this trend. For example, the "no-growth" state of educational administration and the increased number of graduate degrees being awarded in educational administration has made a large pool of qualified human talent available. As a result many local districts have "in-house" greater expertise than can be secured from the nearby university. (In fact, one suspects that many practitioners are increasingly skeptical of the capacity of professors to contribute meaningfully to real-world problem solution.) Also, this abundance of talent,

coupled with increased fiscal resources, has enabled state departments of education to upgrade their staffs. With improved and enlarged state department staffs, combined with well-staffed regional service agencies in many states, if the local school district administrators need to look beyond their own organization for assistance they are increasingly turning to these groups. In sum, it is suggested that the practitioner is less dependent upon the university for the traditionally-provided consultative services. In the past, the practitioner has also been greatly dependent upon the university for inservice programs and legitimation. This situation is changing rapidly. In many states periodic acquisition of academic credit is no longer required for validation of administrative credentials--provisions are made for the alternative of district-planned and controlled programs. In many localities the pay plan for administrators places more emphasis on the responsibilities of the position and less emphasis on the academic credentials of the incumbent. As boards of education and superintendents find increasing numbers of persons with earned doctorates vying for entry-level administrative positions (e.g., assistant principal), the "doctorate-on-the-staff" loses its mystique and/or prestige value. The point to be made is simple; the fact that the university controls academic credit and degrees no longer insures that the practitioners will assume a subservient role to university professors. Lastly, based on the statements of practitioners, the conclusion is reached that university personnel have for too frequently: (a) promised what they did not or could not deliver; (b) offered unsolicited, ill-timed, and unwise advice; and (c) approached the relation with practitioners in such a manner that the practitioners felt used. As a result, the practitioners have little interest in a "doctor-patient relationship;"

at the very least, a relationship based on parity is being demanded.

If the relationship between university personnel and practicing administrators is changing as suggested, it does not necessarily follow that antagonism or separation must result. An inventive stance toward the future demands that interventions be made. These may include: (a) field experiences for professors in a learning--not teaching--role; (b) dialogue involving university personnel and leading practitioners to explore respective roles in the further development of the profession and programs of preparation (Intuitively, it seems that the university contribution will be at the cognitive and conceptual levels and the practitioners' contribution will be in providing opportunities for skill development and in culcating the neophyte in the culture of administration); and (c) the creation of formal partnerships where each party is truly equal.

As noted at the outset, any statement of trends relative to administrative practice in education is incomplete, to a degree inaccurate, and largely a function of the professional biases of the observer. Another observer would have probably selected a different set of trends for this discussion. For example, given the equal protection and due process decisions, personnel relationships within local districts are becoming much more formal; the reforms in school finance are many and far-reaching; the so-called "accountability movement" has increased the emphasis the practitioner is giving to comprehensive planning and employee performance evaluation; and with a vocal, diverse clientle being served, the efforts being made by practitioners to provide a wide variety of program opportunities for pupils (i.e., alternative schools within the public school framework) are not insignificant.